

(Mr. Zemskov, Russian Federation)

In the disarmament field Russia's attention is concentrated on the following basic issues: practical reduction of arms levels to the limits provided for in existing bilateral and multilateral agreements; efforts to prevent the proliferation of all types of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and the latest military technology; the elaboration of further arms control measures in areas where such measures have not yet been taken; and further improvement of confidence-building and security-building measures in relations among States. These aims, we believe, reflect the positive processes which are now occurring in the world and will undoubtedly help to make them irreversible. A vital role in achieving these aims, first and foremost in the elaboration of further steps in arms control, can and should be played by the Conference on Disarmament, the unique global negotiating forum. We are convinced of the need to draw on the experience built up by the Conference in recent years, especially during the negotiation of the Convention banning chemical weapons, in order to achieve results in work on other priority questions on the disarmament agenda. Here it is important to speed up the translation into legal treaty language of the discussions in our forum, whether it be on nuclear tests, negative security assurances or on outer space.

I would now like to examine one item on our agenda where I think we can really count on practical results. I refer to the elaboration of a verifiable agreement on a comprehensive nuclear test ban. It seems to us that conditions for solving this problem are more favourable than at any time since nuclear weapons first appeared. Nuclear testing grounds all over the world have already been silent for some considerable time. In Russia - which from the moment of the proclamation of its independence has not conducted a single nuclear explosion - under a decision taken by President B.N. Yeltsin on 5 July 1993 our moratorium on nuclear tests has been extended for as long as the moratorium declared by other States is observed de jure and de facto by them. In this connection I would also like to welcome the decision of the United States Administration to extend its moratorium on nuclear explosions, as well as the statement made by President François Mitterrand of France, who unambiguously rejected a unilateral resumption by France of nuclear tests after the expiry of the moratorium on nuclear explosions it declared on 8 April 1992. We express the hope that other nuclear States will also continue to show restraint and refrain from conducting nuclear tests.

There has also been a breakthrough on the issue of conducting negotiations on a nuclear test ban. Here we believe the agreement reached by the Presidents of Russia and the United States of America in Vancouver to the effect that negotiations on a multilateral nuclear test ban should begin in the very near future is of special significance. We cannot but note the positive contribution which France has been making with its initiatives for a rapid start to multilateral negotiations on this subject. We believe that the discussion we had at the last plenary meeting on the question of nuclear tests also testifies to the fact that the issue of starting a multilateral negotiating process is now ripe for solution.